The Bahamas: Parliament passes bill to officially recognize church headquarters

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Inter-American Division > Communication Department

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Prime Minister of the Bahamas, Rt. Hon. Hubert A. Ingraham, introduces the Bill to incorporate the Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission as a legal entity of the Adventist Church in the Bahamas in parliament on Monday, May 9, 2011.

May 11, 2011 - Nassau, Bahamas...Nigel Coke/ACUM

The bill to incorporate the newly organized the recently established Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists (ACUM) was passed in the Bahamas parliament on May 9, 2011. This historic bill, which was passed by a unanimous vote, formalizes ACUM as the legal entity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Bahamas.

"On behalf of the leaders and members of our four conferences and institution, I thank the government and opposition of the Bahamas for their full support in the passage of this bill," said Pastor Leonard Johnson, president of ACUM. "While the union is a religious organization, incorporation now provides the authority to transact business and also be officially recognized as the parent organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, particularly in the Bahamas."

Prime Minister of the Bahamas, Rt. Hon. Hubert A. Ingraham, in introducing the bill, observed that Adventists are people with good moral standing. He said, "Your faith ministry and social outreach programs resonate with significant numbers of our citizens. The government welcomes the emphasis that your teachings and practices place upon healthy and wholesome lifestyle, promoting strong families and catering to the needs of young people, especially those at risk."

Prior to the passage of this bill, the Bahamas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists functioned as the legal entity of the church in the jurisdiction of the Bahamas. This was done primarily through the president of the conference who was granted 'corporation sole' and operated in harmony with the church and its policies.

Now, with this incorporation, the current president of ACUM, Pastor Leonard Johnson, is granted "corporation sole", which is held by whoever is the union president at anytime in accordance with the policies of the church and the power vested in him by the union's executive committee.

At its last conference session, the Bahamas Conference voted late last year to incorporate ACUM in keeping with the practice that where there are several conferences and a union headquartered in one country that the union becomes incorporated. The delegates also voted at this time to pass on a recommendation to the Inter-American Division, its regional parent body, that the name 'Bahamas Conference' be changed to 'South Bahamas Conference'.

ACUM held its first executive committee meeting and its inauguration service on January. It was organized on Nov. 2010 as one of the two unions emerging from the dissolution of the 104-year-old West Indies Union Conference and comprises three conferences, one mission, and six primary and secondary schools in the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. ACUM also owns and operates with the Jamaica Union Conference one of the largest Seventh-day Adventist universities worldwide - the Northern Caribbean University (NCU) - located in Mandeville, Jamaica.